

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

The Title is amended to be more descriptive of the claimed invention.

The specification is amended by the present response to correct for minor informalities. The changes made to the specification are deemed to be self-evident from the original disclosure, and thus are not deemed to raise any issues of new matter.

Claims 1-12 are pending in this application. Claims 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, and 10 are allowed. Claims 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, and 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. patent 6,005,612 to Kikuchi et al. (herein "Kikuchi") in view of U.S. patent 6,512,549 to Iijima et al. (herein "Iijima").

Initially, applicants gratefully acknowledge the early indication of the allowance of claims 1, 2, 5, 6, 9 and 10.

Applicant and applicants' representative also wish to thank Examiners Tillery and Garber for the interview granted on July 1, 2003. During that interview the outstanding rejections were discussed in detail. Further, during that interview claims amendments of the rejected claims to clarify those claims over the applied art were discussed. The present response sets forth the discussed claim amendments. During the interview it was tentatively agreed that the amended claims appear to distinguish over the applied art.

Addressing now the rejection of claims 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, and 12 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Kikuchi in view of Iijima, that rejection is traversed by the present response.

It is initially noted that each of independent claims 3, 7, and 11 is amended by the present response to clarify features recited therein. Specifically, those claims recite an embodiment shown, as a non-limiting example, in Figure 12 of the present specification. As clarified in claims 3, 7, and 11, according to an auto-focus operation recited therein during a

first auto-focus operation an amount of shift is set to a maximum value and a substantial focus position is calculated. During a second and subsequent auto-focus operations the amount of shift is decreased and is set to a position closer to the substantial focus position and a final focus position is obtained. Thereby, the number of times the auto-focus operations are performed is changed based on the number of recording pixels set by the recording pixel number setting means, and such that each auto-focus operation subsequent to the first auto-focus operation has a decreased amount of shift of the focus lens system.

With reference to Figure 12 in the present specification again is a non-limiting example, during a first step S20 the amount of shift of the focus lens system is set. Then, if the number of pixels is set to the lowest resolution value, which in the noted example is 640 x 480 pixels, the operation is terminated. However, if a more precise pixel resolution setting is set, then in a next auto-focus operation the amount of shift of the focus on the system is decreased. If an even higher recording pixel resolution is set the amount of the shift of the focus on the system can be even further decreased.

The operation clarified in each of claims 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, and 12 is believed to clearly distinguish over the applied art to Kikuchi in view of Iijima. Neither Kikuchi nor Iijima teach or suggest changing an amount of shift of a focus lens system based on a set number of recording pixels such that each auto-focus operation subsequent to a first auto-focus operation has a decreased amount of shift of the focus lens system. Thus, each of the above-noted claims is believed to clearly distinguish over the combination of teachings of Kikuchi in view of Iijima.

As no other issues are pending in this application, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is now in condition for allowance, and it is hereby respectfully requested that this case be passed to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Surinder Sachar', written in black ink.

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